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Memorandum

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Project Title: San Diego County Hydrograph Modification Plan

Project No: 133904

San Diego County Hydrograph Modification Plan

Subject: Using Continuous Simulation to Size Storm water Control Facilities

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To: Sara Agahi, San Diego County

From: Tony Dubin, Brown and Caldwell
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Brown and Caldwell prepared this memo to help civil engineers through the process of sizing storm water control facilities to meet San Diego County's Interim Hydromodification Criteria (IHC). Since the publication of the IHC this past January, the County has been engaged in outreach activities to explain the new storm water modeling methods required by the IHC and storm water facilities that could meet the IHC performance standard. In response to the outreach efforts, the County has received several questions and comments along a common theme:

1. How do we perform continuous hydrologic modeling analyses to size storm water control facilities?
2. What is the precise meaning of the peak flow and flow duration curve matching standard described in the IHC memo?

This document is not a complete "how-to manual" for conducting continuous hydrologic modeling to meet the County's IHC, but we hope it addresses the major technical concerns of the local engineering community.

Using Continuous Simulation Models to Size Storm Water Facilities

The IHC requires continuous simulation hydrologic modeling to adequately size storm water control facilities. This is a significant break with the practice described in the County of San Diego's Hydrology Manual of using event-based modeling to determine whether a storm water pond, swale or other device was properly sized. Event-based modeling computes storm water runoff rates and volumes generated by a synthetic rainfall event with a total depth that matches local records (e.g., rainfall depths shown in County isopluvial maps). By contrast, continuous modeling uses a long time series of actual recorded precipitation data as input a hydrologic model. The model in turn simulates hydrologic fluxes (e.g., surface runoff, groundwater recharge, evapotranspiration) for each model time step.

Continuous hydrologic models are usually run using one-hour or 15-minute time steps, depending on the type of precipitation data available and computational complexity of the model. Continuous models generate outputs for each model time step and most software packages allow the user to output a variety of different hydrologic flux terms. For example, a continuous simulation model setup with 25 years of hourly precipitation data will generate 25 years of hourly runoff estimates, which corresponds to runoff estimates for each of the 219,000 time steps (each date and hour) of the 25 year simulation period. While creating and running continuous simulation models involves more effort than running event-based models, the clear benefit of the continuous approach is that these models allow an engineer to estimate how often and for how long flows will exceed a particular threshold. Limiting how often and for how long geomorphically significant flows occur is at the heart of San Diego County's approach to hydrograph modification management.

Two common models were presented at a recent APWA workshop on HMP issues: HSPF and HEC-HMS. HSPF refers to the Hydrologic Simulation Program-FORTRAN and is distributed by the USEPA. HEC-HMS refers to the Hydrologic Modeling System (HMS) produced by the US Army Corps of Engineers Hydraulic Engineering Center (HEC). Engineers unfamiliar with these software packages should seek out training opportunities and online guidance. The USEPA conducts training workshops around the US to help teach engineers how to use HSPF. HEC-HMS training is provided through ASCE and third-party vendors.

The following list describes the major elements of developing a hydrologic model and using that model to size storm water facilities that meet the IHC.

1. Select an appropriate historical precipitation dataset for the analysis.
    a. The precipitation station should be located near the project site or at least receive similar rainfall intensities and volumes as the project site.
    b. The station should also have a minimum of 25-years of data recorded at hourly intervals or more frequently.
2. Develop a model to represent the pre-project conditions, including
    a. Land cover types
    b. Soil characteristics
    c. General drainage direction and slope
3. Develop a model to represent the post-project conditions, including
    a. New land cover types – more impervious surfaces
    b. Soil characteristics
    c. Any modifications to the drainage layout
4. Examine the model results to determine how the proposed development affects storm water flows
    a. Compute peak flow recurrence statistics (described below)
    b. Compute flow duration series statistics (described below)
5. Iteratively size storm water control facilities until the post-project peak flows and durations meet the performance standard described below.

Understanding the Peak Flow and Flow Duration Performance Criteria

The IHC is based on a peak flow and flow duration performance standard. To compute the peak flow and flow duration statistics described in the standard, model users must have a method for evaluating long time series outputs (usually longer than the 65,000 rows available in MS Excel 2003 and earlier versions) and computing both peak flow frequency statistics and flow duration statistics.

We recommend computing **peak flow frequency statistics** by constructing a partial-duration series rather than an "annual maximum" series, because the partial-duration series provides better resolution for assigning recurrence intervals to events that occur more frequently than once per 10 years, which are the events that are most important for the HMP This involves examining the entire runoff time series generated by the model, dividing the runoff time series into a set of discrete unrelated events, determining the peak flow for each event, ranking the peak flows for all events and then computing the recurrence interval or plotting position for each storm event. To limit the number of discrete events to a manageable number, we usually only select events that are larger than a 3-month recurrence when generating the partial duration series. We consider flow events to be "separate" when flow rates drop below a threshold value for a period of at least 24 hours. The threshold should be less than the two-tenths of the 5-year flow rate that forms the lower limit to the IHC control range, but high enough to create a manageable number of events in the partial-duration series – less than 200 events.

The exercise described above will generate a table of peak flows and corresponding recurrence intervals (i.e., frequency of occurrence for a particular flow). For continuous modeling and peak flow frequency statistics, it is important to remember that events refer to *flow events* and not precipitation events. Peak flow frequency statistics estimate how often flow rates will exceed a given threshold. For example, the 5-year flow event represents the flow rate that is equaled or exceeded an average of once per 5 years (and the storm generating this flow does not necessarily correspond to the 5-year precipitation event). Ranking the storm events generated by a continuous simulation and computing the recurrence interval of each storm will generate a table similar to Table 1 below.

Readers who are unfamiliar with how to compute the partial-duration series should consult reference books or online resources for additional information. For example, *Hydrology for Engineers*, by Linsley et all, 1982, discusses partial-duration series on pages 373-374 and computing recurrence intervals or plotting positions on page 359. *Handbook of Applied Hydrology*, by Chow, 1964, contains a detailed discussion of flow frequency analysis, including Annual Exceedance, Partial-Duration and Extreme Value series methods, in Chapter 8. The US Geological Survey (USGS) has several hydrologic study reports available online that use partial-duration series statistics (see http://water.usgs.gov/ and http://water.usgs.gov/osw/bulletin17b/AGU_Langbein_1949.pdf).

Table 1. Example Peak Flow Frequency Statistics

Recurrence Interval (years)	Peak Flow (cfs per acre)
58.5	0.73
21.9	0.69
13.5	0.53
9.8	0.53
7.6	0.51
6.3	0.51
5.3	0.50
4.6	0.50
4.1	0.49
3.7	0.48
3.3	0.48
3.0	0.46
2.8	0.45
2.6	0.45
2.4	0.45
2.3	0.45
2.1	0.44
2.0	0.42

Flow duration statistics are more straightforward to compute than peak flow frequency statistics. Flow duration statistics provide a simple summary of how often a particular flow rate is exceeded. To compute the flow duration series, rank the entire runoff time series output and divide the results into discrete bins. Then, compute how often the flow threshold dividing each bin is exceeded. For example, let's assume the results of a 35-year continuous simulation hydrologic model with hourly time steps show that flows leaving a project site exceeded 5 cfs an average of about once per year for 30 hours at a time. This corresponds to a total of 1050 hours of flows exceeding 5 cfs over 35 years. Another way to express this information is to say a flow rate of 5 cfs is exceeded 0.34 percent of the time. Computing the "exceedance percentage" for other flow rates will fill out the flow duration series. Table 2 lists an example flow duration series.

Table 2. Example Flow Duration Statistics

Flow (cfs per acre)	Percent of Time Flow Rate is Exceeded
0.02	0.67%
0.03	0.43%
0.04	0.34%
0.06	0.27%
0.07	0.21%
0.09	0.17%
0.10	0.15%
0.12	0.12%
0.13	0.11%
0.15	0.09%
0.16	0.08%
0.17	0.07%
0.19	0.06%
0.20	0.05%
0.22	0.05%
0.23	0.04%
0.25	0.04%
0.26	0.03%

The intention of the IHC performance standard is to limit the potential for new development to generate accelerated erosion of stream banks and stream bed material in the local watershed by matching the post-project hydrograph to the pre-project hydrograph for the range of flows that are likely to generate significant amounts of erosion within the creek. The IHC memo identified the geomorphically significant flow range as extending from two-tenths of the 5-year flow to the 10-year flow (0.2Q5 to Q10). The performance standard requires the following:

A. For flow rates from 20% of the pre-project 5-year runoff event (0.2Q5) to the pre-project 10-year runoff event (Q10), the post-project discharge rates and durations shall not deviate above the pre-project rates and durations by more than 10% over more than 10% of the length of the flow duration curve.

B. For flow rates from 0.2Q5 to Q5, the post-project peak flows shall not exceed pre-project peak flows. For flow rates from Q5 to Q10, post-project peak flows may exceed pre-project flows by up to 10% for a 1-year frequency interval. For example, post-project flows could exceed pre-project flows by up to 10% for the interval from Q9 to Q10 or from Q5.5 to Q6.5, but not from Q8 to Q10.

Determining When a Storm Water Control Facility Meets the IHC Performance Standard

The previous section discussed how to calculate peak flow frequency and flow duration statistics. By comparing the peak flow frequency and flow duration series for pre-project and post-project conditions, an engineer can determine whether a stormwater control facility would perform adequately or if its size should be increased or decreased. The easiest way to determine if a particular storm water facility meets the IHC performance standard is to plot peak flow frequency curves and flow duration curves for the pre-project and post-project conditions.

Figure 1 shows a **flow duration curve** for a hypothetical development. The three curves show what percentage of the time a range of flow rates are exceeded for three different conditions: pre-project, post-project and post-project with storm water mitigation. For this hypothetical example, the computed minimum geomorphically significant flow rate is 0.10 cfs, which equals the pre-project 0.2Q5 flow. (The 0.2Q5 flow rate should be calculated using the partial-duration series method described above; values of 0.2Q5 will be site specific.) According to Figure 1, flows leaving the project site would equal or exceed this value about 0.14% of the time (about 12 hours per year). For post-project conditions, this flow rate would occur more often – about 0.38% of the time (about 33 hours per year). This increase in the duration of the geomorphically significant flow after development illustrates why duration control is closely linked to protecting creeks from accelerated erosion. Higher flows that last for longer durations provide the energy necessary to increase the amount of erosion in local creeks. The post-project mitigated condition would include stormwater controls designed to limit the duration of geomorphically significant flows. Figure 1 shows that flows exceed 0.10 cfs only 0.08% of the time, which is less than pre-project conditions. This means the stormwater control mitigations would counteract the effects of the increased pavement associated with development projects.

The flow duration plots should be examined to determine whether a stormwater control facility would meet the IHC. Looking at the flow range between 0.2Q5 and Q10, the post-project mitigated curve should plot on or to the left of the pre-project curve. If the post-project curve plots to the left of the pre-project curve, this means a particular flow would occur for shorter durations due to storm water controls. Minor deviations where the post-project durations exceed the pre-project durations are allowed over a short portion of the flow range as described in IHC item A above.

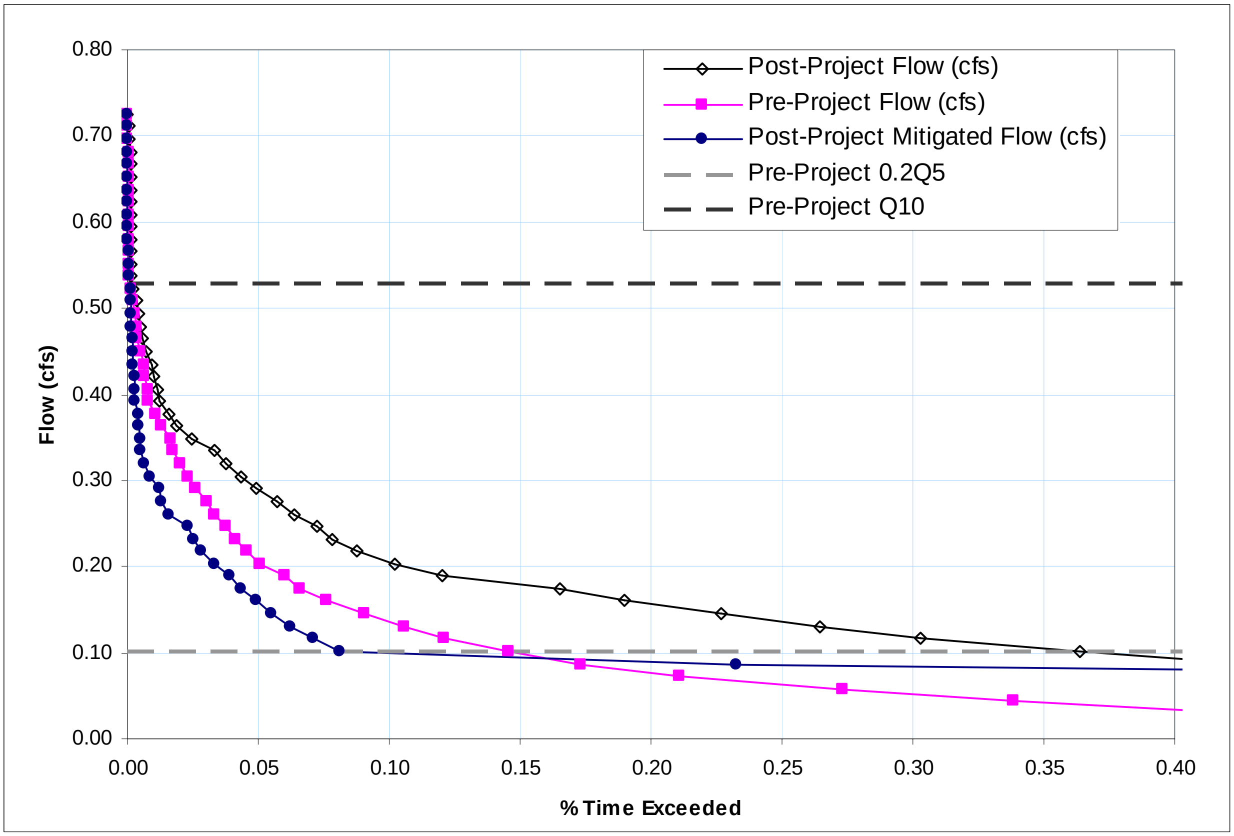

Figure 1. Flow Duration Series Statistics for a Hypothetical Development Scenario

Figure 2 shows a **peak flow frequency curve** for pre-project, post-project and post-project with storm water mitigation scenarios. The curves indicate how often a particular flow rate would be equaled or exceeded. For example, the pre-project 5 year flow rate would be 0.5 cfs per acre. This means under pre-project conditions, a flow rate of 0.5 cfs per acre would be equaled or exceeded an average of once per 5 years. For developed conditions, this 0.5 cfs per acre peak flow rate occur more often – about once per 1.5 years or, expressed another way, more than 3 times as often. The developed 5 year flow rate would increase by 30 percent over the pre-project condition, from 0.5 cfs per acre to about 0.65 cfs per acre.

Storm water control facilities should reduce peak flows from the site to levels less than or equivalent to the pre-project conditions. To determine whether a storm water facility provides sufficient protection, examine the peak flow frequency curves to see if the post-project mitigated peak flows are lower than pre-project peak flows of the same recurrence interval. The post-project mitigated scenario curve should plot below the pre-project curve for recurrence intervals between 0.2Q5 and Q10 to meet the IHC performance standard, with the possible exception of the small, allowable deviations described above in IHC item B.

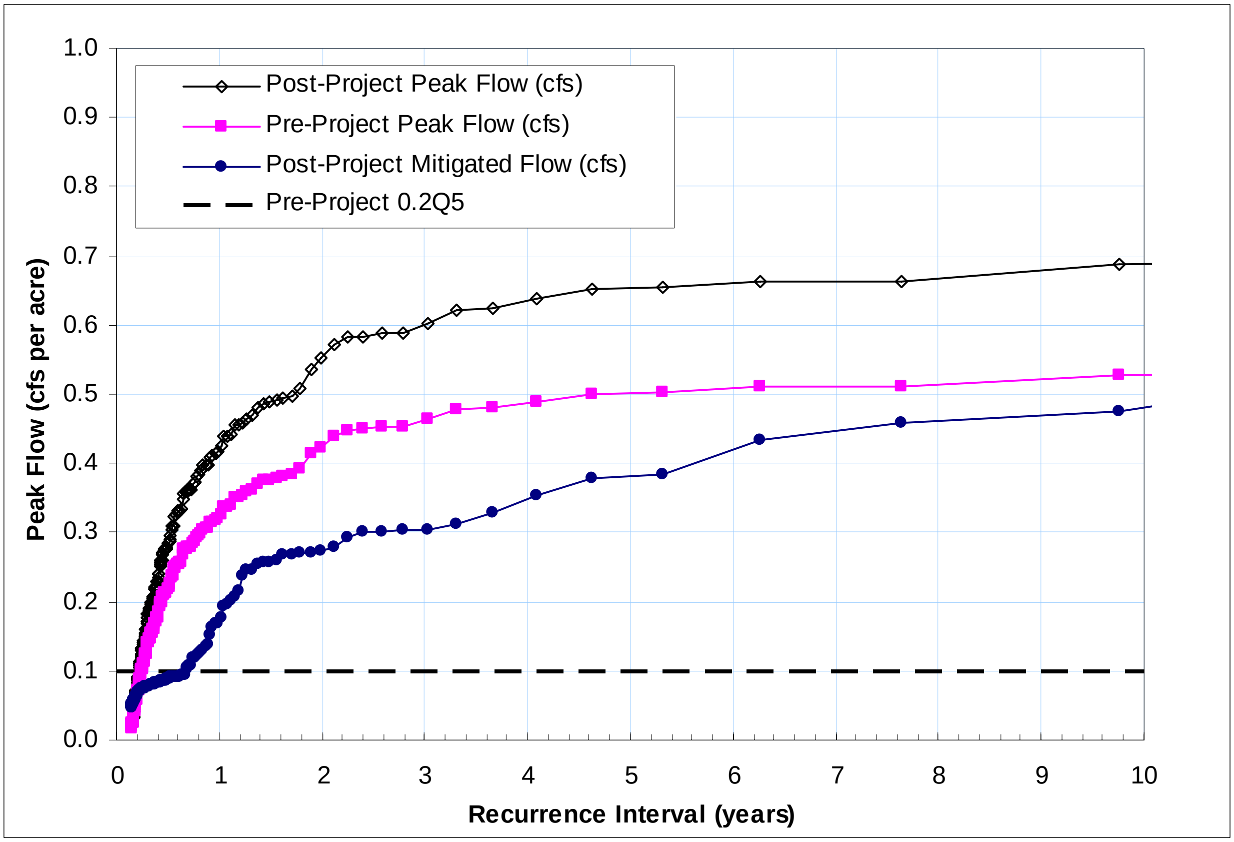

Figure 2. Peak Flow Frequency Statistics for a Hypothetical Development Scenario

In summary, this memorandum outlines the general methodology for using continuous simulation modeling and statistical analysis to size stormwater facilities to meet the IHC. The key steps involve developing a model to evaluate pre-project and post-project stormwater runoff, computing peak flow frequency and flow duration statistics and using these statistical results, via the graphical method shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, to determine if a stormwater facility is adequately sized to meet the IHC performance requirements.

References

1) Linsley, RK Jr.; Koher, MA; Paulhas, JLH; Hydrology for Engineers, 1982; McGraw-Hill Inc.

2) Chow, VT; Handbook of Applied Hydrology, 1964; McGraw-Hill Inc.